



PRESS RELEASE

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KH Strike Group finishes Fall deployment

By Mass Communications Specialist Seaman Matthew Reinhardt, Kitty Hawk public affairs

USS KITTY HAWK, At Sea -- After traveling more than 15,200 nautical miles and launching more than 8,000 aircraft, USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) Carrier Strike Group returned to Yokosuka, Japan, Dec. 10, ending a two-month deployment.

The strike group departed Yokosuka with the embarked Carrier Air Wing 5 Oct. 17, and pulled into Sasebo, Japan, on Kyushu Island, from Nov. 6 to 9, for its first port visit.

After Sasebo, the strike group took part in the 18th ANNUALEX, a week-long exercise which had more than 100 American and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ships trained together, between Nov. 9 to 14.

“We don’t exercise with anyone else on this scale,” Cmdr. Russ Blair, Battle Force Seventh Fleet exercise and plans officer, said during the exercise. “This is [also] one of the largest fleet training exercises we participate in.”

The last stop for the strike group was Hong Kong, Nov. 23 to 27. Kitty Hawk’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) division organized 20 tours of Hong Kong and its surrounding areas, including mainland China, for 702 Sailors.

Yeoman Seaman Jessica Gardner participated in an MWR tour of Lantau Island.

“It’s really an eye-opener to other cultures,” said Gardner. “Seeing how different people live in different environments, it’s a good experience for Navy Sailors.”

Kitty Hawk’s Religious Ministries Department organized community service projects for both of the strike group’s port visits. More than 220 Sailors dedicated their free time to improving the communities they visited.

During this underway period, 41 Kitty Hawk Sailors were interviewed by Japanese author Hiromi Nakamura for a book about Kitty Hawk’s flight deck.

With the fall cruise and all its challenges behind them, Sailors will finally be able to see their loved ones, spouses, and for a few, their newborn children.

Aviation Electrician's Mate 1st Class (AW) James Harper celebrates his birthday when Kitty Hawk pulls in. That same day he will be able to see his wife, Jennifer, and for the first time, meet their new-born daughter.

"It's the best birthday present I could ever have," said Harper. "I just want to be able to go home and spend time with my kids."

The Kitty Hawk Strike Group is the largest carrier strike group in the Navy. It includes the Kitty Hawk, the aircraft squadrons and staff of Carrier Air Wing 5, the guided-missile cruisers USS Shiloh (CG 67) and USS Cowpens (CG 63), and Destroyer Squadron 15 staff. The group's ships and destroyer squadron staff operate from Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan, and the air wing and staff operate from Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan.

To find more news about the Kitty Hawk Strike Group, visit the Navy NewsStand at www.news.navy.mil/local/cv63/.

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